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Straws and Thistledown

The Work of Odd Moments

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BY

LUMAN G. GRISTE



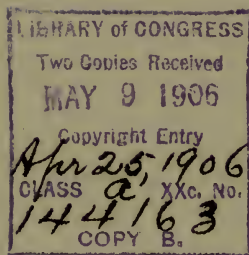
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TO MY WIFE
ZILPHA
WHOSE HAPPINESS HAS BEEN,
TO LIFT THE LOAD FROM TIRED SHOULDERS.
THIS IS INSCRIBED.

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PART I.
STRAWS.

STRAWS AND THISTLEDOWN.

T W O

Two flowers growing on one stem;
Mingling their sweet breath,
And sharing, each with each,
The jewelled dew-drops, in their fragrant hearts.

Two doves, that wing and wing,
Together, flew away into the dark.

Two lovers, arm in arm,
Wandered away, down a winding
Wild-wood path, forgot the world,
And lost themselves, in loves sweet content.

Two souls, love linked,
And calmly waiting, 'Time's gathering sickle.
If it haply be, that a single stroke
Shall cut the mystic knot of life,
And we go out together;
Then death is robbed, and terrorless;
The change is but a breezy, breathing hour,
At sunrise; of a scented summer morn.

THE BIRCH TREE

Legend of the Iroquois

I LOVE the satin shimmering sheen,
Of the bark of the tall birch tree;
Its scrolls I see, thro' the green'ry gleam,
Like a foam-capped wave at sea.
'Thro' woody vistas its pillars white,
Shine like altar candles, alight.

In times long gone, the red-men free,
Who roamed the forest old;
Loved the bark of the good birch tree,
As a miser loves his gold;
Loved and prized, did the red-man bold,
The bark of the birch tree, more than gold.

It made, for the primitive artist, and scribe,
Canvas, and tablet too;
A roof, that sheltered his dusky bride,
And furnished his light canoe,
Light as wind-blown thistledown,
When autumn woods, are sere and brown.

And when his form, in the grave was laid,
The birch bark, made his shroud.

And a tiny canoe, of white bark made,
 With arrows, and bow, and head-dress proud,
Placed close to the hand of the warrior brave,
For use in the journey, beyond the grave.

For a journey long, and a river wide,
 Barred his way, to the hunting ground;
Where children, friends, and faithful bride,
 And all he had lost, would yet be found;
Could he cross that river, deep and blue,
To the promised land, of warrior true.

Had he been false, to his tribe or home;
 Favors forgotten, or friends foresworn;
His boat in mid river, went down like a stone,
 And in barren wastes, and murky shades,
His soul must wander forever alone,
Must wander, and grieve, and moan.

Had he been warrior, good and true,
 And sung the death song brave;
His boat, when launched on the river blue,
 Despite the demons beneath the wave;
Safe, speeds by the paddle's graceful swing,
Like a brooding bird, on home-ward wing.

THE PIONEER

Written for My Mother

TONIGHT, I am dreaming, all alone,
In fancy, by the old hearthstone.
Come, sit with me in the ruddy light;
Pile high the logs, till the fire glows bright.
Watch the flames, as they rise and fall;
And the shadows flicker along the wall:
Ghostly shadows, that come and go,
Bringing memories of long ago.
Faces and scenes of times long fled,
I see in the glowing embers red.
Strange forms from each shadowy corner creeps;
"The past o'er the shoulder of the present peeps."
Low murmurous voices, seem to float,
Down from the chimney's ample throat;
A weird company, fills the room,
Kith and kin, are again at home.
Children and grand-children, all draw near,
While I tell the story of the pioneer.
Join the circle, and list to the tale,
Of your great-grand-sire, Obed Hale.
Born of puritan pilgrim stock,
In the land of nutmeg, and wooden clock;
Whose moral code of *strict* renown,

Hanged a witch, in Salem town.
At cart's tail, scourged the Quaker meek;
Drove Williams to the forest bleak.
Post and pillory, for minor cause,
Church catechism, and old blue laws,
To erring sinner, gave restraint,
And consolation to the saint.
Grim Calvin's creed, each conscience bound;
Reverence for clergy, most profound;
Had potent might, all minds to sway,
And *strictly* kept, the sabbath day.
Tho' infant souls the curse may fear;
The saints, shall "finally persevere."
Stern Justice's sword, was ever bared,
If child was spoiled, no rod was spared.
But might we now as they did then,
Rear such a race of sturdy men,
Men of brawn, and moral might,
Who could *pray* as well as fight.
This date you'll find not hard to fix,
Year of grace, seventeen seventy-six;
David Hale Junior, took for life,
Sweet Ruth Pease, to be his wife:
Blessed with ten connubial joys,
Five were girls, and five were boys.
A lucky star hung o'er the earth,
At the time of Grand-s'r's birth:
A double blessing it was in truth,

Twin brother and sister, Obed and Ruth.
'Twas seventeen eighty, the records say,
October the month, the twenty-third day.
Obed grew up sturdy and strong,
Blithe and happy, as the day was long;
He climbed the mountains, roamed the fields,
Seined the shad, and bobbed for eels:
Foremost in frolic, lark and fun,
Quick at repartee, and pun,
Versed in all the arts to please,
Still he dearly loved to tease:
In witness hear this truthful tale,
Of his cousin, Tamar Hale.
In a friendly little tussle,
This luckless maiden, lost her bustle:
She mourned its loss, ah! such a pity,
'Twas sent her, with this shameful ditty.

<p>"Tamar Hale, lost her tail, Sam Hale, found it; Tom Hale, took it to mill, Will Hale, ground it."</p>
--

Chronology

David Hale, and Ruth Pease,
Father and mother, of Obed Hale.
Samuel Hale, and Mindwell Pease,
Father and mother, of Mindwell Hale.

Obed's great-grand-sire, David Hale,
Was brother, loyal, true and proved,
To Mindwell's great-grand-sire, John Hale,
Making cousins, thrice removed.

On the twenty-sixth day of August, eighteen two,
Obed Hale, took Mindwell Hale
By the hand, and said before
God's altar, the vows that made them one.
They walked life's path together,
For five and thirty years.
On September fourth, eighteen thirty-seven;
Mindwell heard the divine summons,
And folding her weary, toil-worn hands,
Passed peacefully, and in christian hope,
To the other side, "To be forever with the Lord."

To them were born ten children;
Five sons, and five daughters,
Who each and all lived to marry,
And raise to themselves, children,
The sons and daughters of Obed
And Mindwell, were as follows:
George, Lucy, Obed Pease, Albert,
Lorette, Louisa, Andrew Jackson,
Samuel, Emeline, and Mary Ann.

Immigration

In the year of grace eighteen sixteen:
Obed and Mindwell, gathered
Their household goods, and "gods,"
Bade farewell to home and friends,
And by horse team and wagon;
Immigrated to the wilderness of Ohio.
Arriving October eighth in Hambden,
With a family of six children,
They began in a log house.
Bearing and enduring, the labor,
Privation, and hardship, in cheerful hope,
With the keen zest and enjoyment
Of life, that comes of faithful toil.
Some years later, the log built house
Was replaced by a cozy substantial
Farm-house: and it was in this home
That I knew, Grandfather Hale.

The Man

"God's noblest work—an honest man."

A plain blunt man, who spoke his mind,
A loyal friend and neighbor kind.
Despised the fashions, hated creeds;

Liked men who boasted *not* their deeds.
His rule of life, the golden one
Of Jesus Christ, God's only son.
His creed, in words was scant and few
'Twas just the Lord's commandment new.
The poor, the blind, the halt and lame,
His hospitality might claim.
Mulley cousins by the score,
Came often to his open door;
Were kindly welcomed, warmed and fed,
Given shelter, board and bed;
Their horses, cattle, dogs and all,
Furnished shelter, food and stall.
In herbal love they were renowned,
And doctored half the country round:
The rafters in the chamber bare,
Were hung with herbs, and simples rare;
Catnip, to ease the baby's pains,
Wormwood, for broken bones, and sprains,
Smartweed, Through-wort, and Rue,
Elder flowers, and Penny-royal too.
Countless herbs, from field and wood,
Roots of virtue, tried and good.
Priceless in their healing art,
Dear, to the simple nurses heart.

The Kitchen

The cheerful cozy kitchen, low ceiled,
Wide and long, with its floor of ash,
Straight grained, firm and white.
Long low table, where score might sit.
A row of strong substantial chairs,
Straight backed, but with an air
Of homely hospitality, that spoke of welcome;
A splint bottomed rocker before the fire,
That seemed to say, "Sit ye down and rest,"
Be warm, and comfortable, be at home.
A sleek cat purred in serene content,
In the ingle nook, and the dog dreamed
Of game, of hunts, and tramps afield;
His quivering tail, twitching feet and ears,
And low, half smothered bark;
Told how joyfully, even in his sleep,
He would do his master's bidding.
This was the common living room;
Where the good man, and his tidy wife
Received their friends; on all except
State occasions, holidays, funerals and weddings.

The ancient clock, sedate and tall,
Serenly ticked against the wall;
Its honest face, so plain and round,
Was stained with smoke, a golden brown:

Its leaden hands, long, dark and slim,
Like some old maid's, precise and prim;
Deliberately, pointing out the time,
Still speaking in this solemn rhyme;
Like a heart throb, strong and slow;
Time that comes, must surely go.
For old, for middle aged, and young,
This was the song, the old clock sung.
Work, work, work alway;
Play, play, play all day;
Laugh, laugh, laugh and smile,
Weep, weep, weep the while.
This song of toil, of grief and mirth,
Will last as long, as time and earth.
The last man, full of pain and years,
Shall hear its echo, in his ears;
While earth dissolves, in cosmic fires,
Time stands still and death expires.
The fire place, so high and wide,
The house-wife's care, and busy pride;
The swinging crane, so gaunt and slim,
With hooks and trammels, neat and trim,
Where steaming kettles, swung and boiled,
While ruddy flames around them coiled;
And savory odors, came from them,
Fit for gods, and hungry men.
The brick built oven, close beside,
Its mouth twice weekly, opened wide;

A roaring fire therein they'd make,
The puddings, bread and beans, to bake:
And to yankee hearts, the dearest prize,
Delicious, golden, "punkin" pies.
The red brick hearth, clean swept and warm,
Secure retreat, from toil, and storm;
The shrine of home, the household's heart,
Where friendship pure, unspoiled by art,
And love unfeigned, divinely blest,
With peace serene, filled every breast.



THE WILD ASTER

In hues of purple, white, and blue;
They spread their petals to the light;
Till comes the snow, still peeping thro'
Their winding-sheet of white.

When frost of age, rests on your brow;
And winter winds blow cold;
Let the wild asters, teach you how,
To, graciously, grow old.

INDIAN SUMMER

THE year is growing gray and old,
The frost of age, is on his hair, and beard;
And like a story, that is quickly told;
His days, have swiftly disappeared.

His sun of life is westward sinking fast,
And memories; life's shadows backward trail;
They hold him firmly to the past,
Like hope, "that reacheth still within the veil."

And now he loiters on his weary way,
Backward glancing, at his lusty prime;
In late November, bare and grey,
There comes a golden summer time.

The fragrant air, is soft and mild,
The hills are veiled in purple smoke;
The russet leaves, in heaps are piled,
From nodding beech, and stately oak.

The golden-rod to silver turns,
The cricket drones his merry pipe;
The bitter-sweet's red berries burn,
In glowing clusters, rich and ripe.

The work-day of the year is done,
And waiting for the evening gray;
His task complete, his race will run,
Enjoys his well earned holiday.

Then let *us*, like the rolling year,
While waiting for the call divine;
With all at peace, and naught to fear,
Take *our* St. Martin's summer time.

Shall it be like warrior, tired and spent,
Feebly leaning on his battle blade;
With nerveless arm, and dimming eye intent,
To view the fearful ruin, he has made?

No, let you and I, be not one of these,
But like the harvester, his work well done;
Resting among his gathered sheaves,
And calmly waiting, harvest home.



A SECRET

HERE'S a secret for a friend;
If you would your fortune mend,
Search the meadow grass over,
Till you find a four leaved clover;
'Tis a fairy charm, and true,
'Twill surely bring, good luck to you.

FEAR

SEE, in the gloaming how the plodding
Plow-boy homeward drags his weary feet;
Every fiber of his frame with toil oppressed.
His thoughts are all of rest, and light, and cheer,
In the quiet ingle nook at home.
But soon the darkening path dips down
Into a lonely shadowed silent valley:
Winds round a deeply darkling pool,
Upon whose marge, lies in the gloom,
The murdered stranger's unhallowed grave.
With sudden shock, he marks the growing dark,
Gone is all his weariness, his step grows light,
His ear and eye alert, he feels thy presence
At his shoulder pressing near, and hears
Thy foot-falls soft, behind him following close;
And now thy icy breath, blows on his blanching cheek,
And through his rising, bristling hair,
And elvish finger tips, with eerie touch,
Go thrilling down his shivering spine.
Thus he rooted stands, with bated breath,
Cold sweating brow, and wide spread hands,
Until the chain invisible, that binds him, is unloosed;
When his fear urged feet fly faster
Than the winged heels of Mercury;
Until he leaves behind the shadow

Haunted valley, and wins the upland slope,
Where the blessed day-light lingers still,
And the skulking spirits, of the coming night,
May not dare to bar his path, or reach
With fearsome clutch, his heart's vibrating strings.



THE SPIRITS OF THE NIGHT

VEILED face, mystic night,
High priestess thou, of solitude and silence:
Whose realms mysterious, touch
The shores of earth, and time,
Tho' its mighty borders outward reach,
Into the vast unknown,
The soundless, lone and dread forever.
Thou shadow wrapped, cloud clothed night;
How gruesome, fantastical, and strange,
Are the myriad spirits, that trooping follow
In thy ceaseless, circling train.
Who knows them? and who knows them not?
In the glare of sun-lighted day, they seem
So dim, and far away, we oft deny them;
But when the trooping shades of night,
With soft-footed pace, advance to hold,
In dusky arms, a resting world,
Go forth alone, and in silence, seek them:
In forest shadowed depths, in valleys dim,

And by the moaning sea. On wind swept heights,
Or in the dim desert's horizon girdled waste
Of cloudless sky, and thirsty blistering sand.
Alone, in the sand ocean's sun scorched heart,
With bated breath and straining sense,
But hark! and at your elbow near,
With gibbering mouth, close pressed,
They whisper in your waiting, shrinking ear.
Again, how often in the brooding silence,
Of your solitary chamber, you feel their presence,
In silence, they sit, or walk with you,
Lay shadowy hands upon your head,
Shuffle and whisper, in corners dim,
Like the low voice of wind-stirred pines:
You cannot see, but *feel* and *know them there*.
Or if you will, at night walk
The deserted aisles, of some dim old church.
By the uncertain light, of the waning moon,
And listen, to the mocking echoes,
Of your own intrusive foot falls,
Clamoring over head, among the groined arches;
Leaping from side to side, in elvish glee,
Dying away, in falling cadence,
Along the pillared aisles, to end in breathless
Laughter, down among the *dust* and *dead*.
Then in mute expectation, wait,
While the coursing blood, flows hot,
Or icy cold within your corded veins;

They surely come, sometimes with swift rush,
Like storm-driven mist, anon they steal
Upon the senses, like the hum of intense silence,
That fills the fear strained ears,
As the hollow boom of surf, upon a shingly beach.
And presses upon the consciousness,
Like a *phantom hand laid upon the soul*.
You feel in this shadow infinite,
A living presence that *speaks* to you,
And touches with its fingers lean and cold,
Your inmost self. This living *something*,
Is a part of death; portion of the beyond,
That lies behind, the inscrutable wall of life,
Impassable; to mortals banned and barred.



SLEEP

SWEET sleep, our best beloved;
Fair sister of that other sleep,
That comes but once, to all.
Thou, who nightly cradles us,
Upon thou downy bosom.
Covering our tired senses o'er
With thy all embracing robe;
Its warp of shadow, and woof
Of twilight's rosy glow,
Shot here and there, with starbeams pale.

Most gracious friend: who shades the light
From tired eyes, and weaves
The tangled web of life anew.
That bids us put life's burden down
And rest; and for a space, forget.
Still the soul will wander
Up and down, that mysterious realm
That lies so near, and yet so far away,
Revisiting old-time scenes, and places dear.
In dreams we see once more
Our childhood's home, and we
As children, are again at play:
The whistled call of waiting playmates
Echoes through the long dead past
Like jangled music, from a broken reed,
Or the sweet uncertain melody
Of an old, almost remembered, lullaby.
Here in perennial youth,
Sweetheart and lover meet.
But yesternight her yielding
Waist, my arm clasped round;
Her soft cheek, pressed to mine;
The thrilling touch of trembling eyelids
Into oblivion swept, the forty years
That lie between the sordid now and golden then.
And here we find the loved and lost,
For whom sad hearts have yearned
Through all the lonesome years;

The dim eyes are alight,
The dead lips smile,
We grasp the once cold hands
That glow again with pulsing life,
Vaguely wondering, *why*
We thought them dead.
In sleep we enter then
The vestibule of death. And lo ! 'tis life,
The adamant wall invisible,
Grows so thin, that we can hear
The whispered converse on the other side;
And smell the perfume, strangely sweet,
On deathless zephyrs borne,
From flowers that never fade.
Thrice blessed sleep, blessed of men,
Of angels, and of God.
Who would not sleep? And sleeping thus,
Who would not dream?



THE HAT

ALL day the bellowing clang, of Belgian musket,
Mingling with the spiteful blare of Springfield rifle,
In crashing volleys tore the trembling air,
And sent the echoes in skurrying haste
To hide among the smoke clothed hills.
The deep diapason of field artillery chiming in,

To swell the battle anthems mighty din.
At last the deathly hiss of bullets hushed,
And the cursed scream of shot and shell was still.
And night closed down dun and cheerless,
The rain-clouds, poured their burdens down,
As if they wept, for the fearsome deeds,
Done that day, in the somber beech wood's shade.
Weary nigh to death, I laid me down
Beside a mouldering moss-covered log to sleep;
Powder stained, foot-sore, weary;
But wrapped in my good grey blanket,
I slept as soft as tired soldier may;
The level rays of the rising sun touched my cheek,
And I awoke from a sweet dream of home:
Rising from my couch of brown wet leaves,
I saw a hat, that had made for me a pillow
Through the night. I took it curiously
In my hands, soft, wide-brimmed, glossy black,
And fine, surely a treasure trove for me;
As I sat upon the log and slowly twirled
The hat between my fingers, I looked down,
And there at my side, close to the log,
A soldier dressed in gray, lay *fast asleep*;
Tall, clean limbed, lithe and fair; the pride
Of some fond Texan mother's loving heart.
I shook him with my hand, *he did not stir*,
And now I saw, just where the curling hair
Parted in rippling waves from the

Fair blue veined temple, a round dark,
Purple spot, for a few moments space,
I gazed in silence, then with reverent
Hand, laid the hat upon the *still*
White face, and went away.



ALONE

THE night is still, the moon is dark,
From the glooming shore, I push my bark;
The stars are pale, the sky is dun,
O'er wrinkled sands, the ripples run;
The purple sea-weed, flaunting wide,
Streams outward with the ebbing tide.
I hunger, and long for the lonesome deep,
Where watch and vigil alone I'll keep.
Alone with my heart and its heavy pain,
Alone on the softly sobbing main,
Alone, alone, what blest relief
To be alone, with my own heart's grief;
With none to hear my sobs and cries
But the waiting deep, and the watching skies.
A lonely sea-bird circles near,
Then away, with a gruesome scream of fear;
Like the one dear dream of life it's fled,
And I am alone, with night, and the dead.
Far down, in the depths of the ocean blue,

Alone, floats the form of my lover true,
With pallid cheeks, and unseeing eyes,
Deep, clasped in ocean's arms he lies,
My loved one, lost, so blithe and brave,
Alone, I am weeping upon your grave,
As down from these wasted cheeks of mine,
The hot tears splash in the ocean's brine.



TO MY WIFE

DEAR heart, do you remember,
When William made a first of April
Party, in the fragrant woods?
And how a score of boys and girls,
Regaled themselves with maple sweets;
Made "wax" on snow, and cakes of ice,
With merry fun, and frolic glee
Till the old woods, *rang* again.
There was Eleazer, Net, and Marion,
John, Tip, and laughing Nell.
With a dozen more, a noisy mob;
Light hearted boys and girls.

We *walked* together, how those little woods
Bring back that happy day to me,
Each hour flew by, as on the wings of birds,
Happy in the present, hoping for a time to be.

And when that day, drew to its golden close,
Do you remember, how we loitered on the way,
Lost, in the spicy depths, from those,
Our comrades, with their laugh and play?

And dear, do you know the way we went,
As we wandered, hand in hand,
Conscious only, of the hour, we spent
In love's enchanted, fairy land?

The memory of that day shall ere abide,
As long as life and thought, are left to me;
We entered paradise, that April even-tide;
Love locked the door, and threw away the key.

And now just thirty years,
Have come and gone,
Since that "All Fools' Day" party,
In the spring time woods.
Those boys and girls are scattered
Like leaves in an autumn gale,
Nearly all have married.
One or two are like a "mateless glove,"
Some have bade the world, *good night* and *gone*.
Poor William, master of the feast
Met a soldier's death at Perryville.
The grass has grown near thirty springs
Beneath the elm, where Marion sleeps.

Some of the boys are grand-sires,
And the girls, white haired widows.
And so the time runs on;
Bringing us its complement, in full,
Of joys and sorrows, failure and success.
Our own dear lad and lassie sweet,
Tho' *he* has gone before; our manly son
On whom we hoped to lean,
When age's winter, drew on apace;
Yet the dearest blessing still,
Because the joy of meeting him,
Takes all the dread, of death away.

L' ENVOI

Now, sweetheart mine,
If it was a fool's paradise
We found, it matters not,
We entered it, that first of April day;
And there please God, we'll ever abide,
Till the angel with the amaranth,
Shall open wide, the gates of pearl.



REMEMBER ME

TODAY, while searching in the attic chamber,
I found some old forgotten school books;
Hand-worn, time-stained, and soiled:

And giving forth that musty odor,
That tells of age, neglect, decay.
But as I turn the dingy pages,
Old-time, familiar faces, greet me;
Some sharp, and clear, and strong,
Others shadowy, dim, and blurred.
Oh! time; this gives to thee a backward turn;
Oh! life; this makes me young again.

That pungent musty smell, is like
A fragrant breeze from far off wooded hills,
And grassy slopes, starred with clover white and red,
Beguiling with its breath, so honey sweet,
The loitering, blundering bumble-bee.
I see the sunshine, softly sliding down
Between the gentle swaying branches;
And dappling all the rippling grass,
With checkered, shifting, glinting gold.
The tawny thrush swings on the drooping elm;
And the blue bird, lilts his liquid song,
To his brown breasted, brooding mate,
Hark! first low and sweet, then loud and strong,
He sounds his love note, *dearie*, DEARIE.

I hear the drowsy hum, and noise of school;
And see the earnest studious faces,
Ranged 'round the old familiar room;

Whose knife scored desks, and battered seats,
And dingy ink be-spattered walls;
Marked and carved, in suggestive
Caricature, or curious arabesque,
By the handy jack-knife,
Of the ever whittling boy.
The master's voice chimes in,
And school has just begun.
Anon I hear the happy laugh,
And harmless jest, of shy, sweet girls;
And the sturdy whoop, and call,
Of careless, healthy, headless boys.
Vanished, are the more than thirty years,
Forgotten, all the weary work-day time;
And I am just a boy at school.
I find upon the thumb worn pages,
Dear, familiar, tho' half forgotten names,
And wonder how I *could* forget.
But there is *one* that never can grow dim;
After all these storm swept years;
That face, with its sweet brown eyes,
Rose leaf cheeks, and tender, winsome mouth;
Fills my memory, like a living presence.
Ah! little sweetheart, I feel thy soft breath
Upon my cheek, and the quick blood
Runs leaping, from my throbbing heart,
And life, with its seductive glamour new,
And all its promise unfulfilled, lies just before me,

And the beauteous land of lovers' hope,
Where we together dwelt, in strangely wondrous
Castles, built of air, whose sun-kissed pinnacles,
Glowed perpetual, in the rosy light of summer morn,
And whose memory, lingers like the perfume,
Faint and sweet, of faded violet, heliotrope, and rose.

From title page to finis, are references and dates;
And written in pointed school-girl script,
And sprawling school-boy hand;
Are couplets, stanzas, verses, queer and quaint.

I see the record here of love,
Of boyish hopes, and fears;
But through the happy laugh of youth,
I see the flash of tears.
And all put in the prayerful plea,
Will you just, remember me?

"Remember me when far away."
"Remember me when wed."
"Remember me this parting day."
"Remember me when dead."

"Remember me when all alone."
"Remember me when gay."
"Remember me when sorrow comes."
"Remember me alway."

On cover, on margin, on fly-leaf I see:
Repeated again, and again, and again;
Like an echo thrown back from eternity's sea,
Love's plea for its own, in sad sweet refrain,
Will you, oh! will you, remember just me?



A BURIAL AT SEA

With bowed uncovered heads,
And gloomy, sorrow shadowed eyes,
A silent group stood near the quarter rail.
The ocean heaved in long low swells,
Like the breast of a quiet sleeper,
And softly lapped, the vessel's oaken sides,
Which rose and fell, in rythemic motion.
The crescent moon, like a silver boat,
Sailed close to the horizon's hem;
The stars shone, and the sea moaned.

The weird glow of the swaying ship's lantern,
Made a little circle of lambent light,
That held within its flickering zone,
The waiting figures on the quarter-deck.
The soft breeze, like timid love's caress,
Toyed with the captain's grizzled hair,
And gently stirred, the stained leaves
Of the prayer book, in his hand.

His subdued voice, had a husky break,
As he slowly read the service for the dead at sea.
Many times and often, had he thus,
For some storm-beaten sea-dog, (safe in port at last),
Read this solemn service, ere committing
To the deep, the worn-out frame.
But now, a sailor stood by the rail,
Holding in his arms a tiny baby form,
The wrapped canvas coffin, of a child.
The short service done; but ere the low *amen*,
There came a cry, like some *wild* thing in pain;
And the widowed mother with arms
Out-stretched, rushed to the vessel's side;
"You *must not put my baby in the sea*.
My own sweet blue-eyed boy; he shall
Stay with *me*, or I will go with *him*."
Then the captain, his hand upon
The mother's arm, said gravely, tenderly,
"My dear, we *must*; kiss the little coffin,
And say, 'I return to God his own.'
Look up, to the stars that shine o'er head,
Not down into the cruel lonesome deep."
There was a swift rush, a white form
Clove the waters, that closed to keep it
"Till the sea gives up its dead."
And the mother stood with empty arms,
While the stars shone, and the sea moaned.

A KISS

'Twas a slumberous summer night,
The dewy air of June was drunk,
With the scent of the wild rose.
The over-hanging arch of sky,
From the center of its dome,
Round the vast horizon's sweep,
Unflecked by cloud or mist,
Glowed like a flawless sapphire,
Thick with sintillating diamonds set.
The drowsy air, heavy with the roses' breath,
Wrapped us, my love and I,
And drew our souls so close,
We knew each others thoughts,
Without the aid of speech
But paltry breath blown words.
Thus we two, so closely near,
In thrilling silence stood.
My lips touched hers,
As soft as fall of rose's leaf,
And fine as its perfume;
'Twas scarce a dozen heart throbs,
But embraced all time,
Past, present, and to come.
If but a moment, it unlocked eternity.
The dimly beautiful door of dreams,

On softly turning hinge, swung back,
And showed to me *thyself*:
And in thy hand, a torch alight
That touched my heart with spark divine,
That burns and glows with love's fire,
Never to be quenched, immortal as the soul.



GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK

GRANDFATHER'S clock, like a grenadier tall,
Stands with its back, close pressed to the wall,
Like an old guardsman, grim visaged and gray.
Who thinks only of duty; and ticking away,
Marks time, as it flies, saying plainly to all,
Be *true* to your trust, whatever befall.

A message it brings to all in the home,
And sends admonition, to those who may roam;
Whatever their fortune, whatever their state,
Be they rich, be they poor, be they lowly or great:
Master and matron, maids, lovers and all,
Be *true* to your trust, whatever befall.

This faithful old servant, and monitor true,
Talks sagely, and wisely, to me and to you.
In the still solemn night time, list if you will,
In gladness or sorrow, it talks to you still;
Like a soldier on guard; one challenge to all,
Be *true* to your trust, whatever befall.

THE KLONDIKER

FOR the end of the quest is a lonely death,
A scattered armful of bones, beside the rugged mountain paths,
Mumbled and gnawed by the lynx that laughs,
Chuckles and laughs, as the white bones slip,
Through the grinding jaws and the blood-red lip;
That the yellow greed should lure from home,
From comfort and plenty, child and wife,
To yield in the desert, his breath of life.
Mosquito bitten, devoured by fleas,
Spent with toil, worn with disease,
He comes o'er the snow-topped mountains drear,
To furnish a feast for the wild beast here:
In his efforts to wrest from its treasure-house old,
The frost locked grains of yellow gold.



SCHOOL IS OUT

By the red school house, I wait today,
With its murmurous hum, like a hive of bees;
It stands at the crossing of the country way,
Where alone I sit beneath the trees,
Till school is out.

I wait, till the shadows grow dark and long,
And the sunshine slant, gilds grass and tree;
I wait till the jostling noisy throng,
In its riotous joy comes forth to me;
When school is out.

For two score years, the loom of time,
Has flung its shuttle, with clanging stroke;
Since a boy, I waited at day's decline,
'Neath the growing shadow of this same oak;
Till school was out.

How we raced, for the pasture green,
Each trying to be, the first at bat;
Such a game has never been seen,
Since we played, our "Two old cat;"
When school was out.

By the sloping bank where the willows grow,
And the shallow water, a ripple made,
The girls in sunbonnets, pink and blue,
With close gathered skirts would wade;
When school was out.

The skies, and rock-built hills so gray,
Have changed not a whit, since then,
But the faces of all my play-mates gay,
Belong to care-worn women and men;
Since school is out.

L' ENVOI

When life's hard lesson, has all been said,
And we have answered the *last* roll-call,
Love's voice murmurs brokenly, *he is dead*,
Earth's school closed for time and all;
We hope, school's just begun.

PART II.
THISTLEDOWN.

A SONG

THE cricket and katy-dids call to me,
From out the moonlight's silver sea,
Jocund and merry, they pipe and sing,
And this is the message to me they bring:
'Thy dear, thy love, she waits for thee,'
Beneath the sweet crab-apple tree,
Thy lady, dainty, sweet, and lone,
Waits 'neath the star be-sprinkled dome;
The loveliest flower, of all is she,
That blooms in hedge-row, haugh, or lea,
Her lily face pure and white,
Illumined by the still moonlight,
Like some sweet patient, saint's I see,
Waiting, watching, wistfully,
While I steal so stealthily,
Where the darkest shadow lies,
That I may give her love's surprise,
The fluffy folds of India silk,
Kiss a shoulder white as milk,
Coyly screen yet half reveal,
The beauties it would fain conceal;
A step, a word, a soft arm's fling,
Hark ! how the cricket, and katy-dids sing.

A CHRISTMAS LETTER

DEAREST, only, daughter mine,
I send by post a little line,
A cozy quiet chat so nice,
With lots of love and some advice.
When festive times are drawing near,
And holidays are almost here,
When Christmas shoppers take the street,
Intent on presents fine or neat,
'Tis then, we're worried, tired and vexed,
Uncertain, doubtful, and perplexed,
In short 'tis trouble without end,
To find a present, for each friend.
Something to wear, or good to eat,
Gloves for hands, or shoes for feet,
Something suited to each need,
Bric-a-brac or books to read.
When each souvenir you select,
Let plain good sense, your choice direct;
Your present will be doubly graced,
If suited to recipient's taste.
Just this one word, be sure and see,
That *gift* and *pocket-book* agree.

My dearest girl, I chance to hear,
Your word for mama's private ear:

“The thing that mostly troubles me,
Is what shall *papa's* present be?”
Now just to make love's labor light,
I will set this matter right:
There are things I'd like in plenty,
So I'll mention ten or twenty.

First of all I'd wish to gain,
A castle fair, in sunny Spain;
With turrets tall, and ramparts bold,
Bearing 'scutcheons quaint and old:
Silken banners rise and fall,
O'er battlement, and banquet hall.
The rose and vine, their perfume yield,
From garden fair, and fertile field;
While reaching far as eye can see,
Are orchards rich, and pastures free.
All of this mayhap shall be,
A present from my girl to me.
My next desire is quickly told,
'Tis moonlight silver, sunset gold,
Fairy charms, that favors gain,
A million links, from friendship's chain:
Dew-drop pearls, Hymettus honey,
The rainbow's buried bay of money;
Teeth for ducks, and yokes for geese,
A pound of wool, from Jason's fleece;
Diamond knobs for horns of snails,

And cunning curls, for pug-dog's tails.
Select the one your fancy draws,
And send, by way of Santa Claus.

Now one thing more, and only one,
Grant me this and I am done.
The sweetest thing man ever had,
My baby's love for her old dad.



A LOVE SONG

SWEETHEART, dear heart, have no fear,
While I whisper in your ear,
Old as time, yet ever new;
Sweetheart, dear heart, I love you.

Sweetheart dear, dear heart sweet,
Love is long, and time is fleet;
Sorrow dies, and care shall flee,
Dear heart, sweetheart, she loves me.

Dear heart, sweetheart, all my own,
She makes sunshine in our home,
Dark days all, to light have grown;
Dear heart, sweetheart, all my own.

AS THE WORLD GOES ROUND

A BACHELOR lone, and a lingering maid;
With the present disgusted,
Of the future afraid;
As the world goes round, and round.

They thought life a labor, a wearisome load,
Not half worth the climb
Up its steep rugged road;
As the world went round, and round.

'Tis love, 'tis love, *sweet* love, sang she,
Would make earth bright,
For him and for me;
While the world goes round, and round.

Only dollars, said he, and the little brown cent,
Contents butcher and baker
And pays for the rent;
As the world goes round, and round.

Dan Cupid, the rascal, you know him I wot,
Transfixed both their hearts,
The very first shot;
As the world went round, and round.

Now a snugglesome, cuddlesome, baby girl,
Reconciles them to labor,
And life's merry whirl;
As the world goes round, and round.



QUEEN OF HEARTS

Stop foolish heart, be still I say,
Love's peerless queen, she comes this way;
The grass, and trees, the earth and sky,
Grow brighter, as she passes by.
I'd dare, and do, or die for thee;
Thou queen of hearts, Sweet Marjorie.

Sweet queen, did thy vassal dare to speak,
Thy gracious favor, he would seek.
Nay, do not turn away thy face,
See, on my knees, I crave thy grace.
'Tis more than all the world to me,
Dear queen of hearts, Sweet Marjorie.

What means this look, confused and shy,
The trembling lip, and downcast eye,
I'll hold, and kiss thee, so, and so,
I cannot, will not, let thee go,
But cherish, love, and live for thee,
My queen of hearts, Sweet Marjorie.

LATELY IDENTIFIED

“WHEN Adam delved, and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?”

The one of leisure, tempter called,
Who early from the garden crawled;
His sophistries and specious hints,
Have raised the *devil* every since;
Had there been no gentleman,
Neither, need have delved or span.



SIR CRAPAUD

A Tale of Chivalry

A BIG bull-frog with a bias mouth,
Lived in a swamp, 'way down south;
He was a portly, pompous fellow,
With a natty waist-coat, of tawny yellow;
Goggled eyes, bright and keen,
And tight fitting coat, of “Lincoln green.”
This frog was known, as a musical crank,
He would sleep all day by a shady bank,
But every night he was on parade,
In fact, was boss of the serenade;
Sharp of eye. and deft of hand,
He played a horn, in the Frogtown band.

A dudish man with an eye-glass round,
Lived in a flat, 'way up in town;
He worshipped the latest society belle,
And thought himself a howling swell;
This dudish man who lived in town,
Liked fricaseed frog's legs, crisp and brown:
This blessed dude, resolved to go,
And hunt in the swamps, for Sir Crapaud.
With repeating gun, and big game-bag,
Fine silver flask that held a jag,
And all the traps that he could tote,
He set sail in a dug-out boat.
He hunted high and he hunted low,
Till at last, on a bog sat Sir Crapaud;
He dropped his pole, took up his gun,
With a fiendish grin said, "Now for *fun*."
But he ere long this truth confessed,
"He who laughs last, can do it best."
This ferocious frog, from 'way down south,
Sprang straight at, the dude-man's mouth.
The boat capsized, quick as a wink,
And spilled the hunter, in the drink.
He lost his gun, and big game-bag
Fine silver flask that held a jag.
Plastered with mud from head to heel,
He crawled to the bank, like a conger eel.
While he hunts no more, by sea or land;
Crapaud still plays, in the Frogtown band.

A DOG-grel TO MUGGINS

THEN I will never beat my dog,
I'll never make him mind,
Poor fellow, he shall run the road,
And *steal* the neighbors blind.

He shall lie behind the stove,
And roast his lazy back,
And taste of all the friends I love,
And *never* get a whack.

He shall play with Snooze and Jum,
And fill himself with fleas,
And sit upon his curly tail,
And *scratch* himself, for ease.

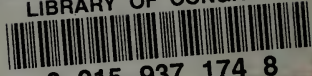
He shall bark, run after teams,
And play the canine hog;
Do anything that's doggoned mean,
Because he is *my* dog.

MY FRIENDS

THE play is done,
And before the prompter
Rings the curtain down,
I give you "gramercy,"
For patience and courtesy.
And if on the level of time,
We never meet again,
Let us hope for reunion,
In that undiscovered country.
Here comes the Tiler, to put out the light,
Again I thank you *all, good night.*

FINIS.

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